

## **Florida State's Terance Mann's Versatility Makes Him Key Cog For FSU; Draws Comparisons To Michael Carter-Williams**

By KJ Edelman  
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Growing up in New England, Terance Mann gained a reputation for doing a little bit of everything on the basketball court. About five years before him, NBA player and former Syracuse star Michael Carter-Williams gained a similar reputation on the same courts.

While participating in the Boston Amateur Basketball Club program, Carter-Williams vaulted to national prominence. When Mann was in the program and Carter-Williams visited as an alumnus, the teenager gained an appreciation for the then-Syracuse guard's game.

Mann's favorite player as a middle schooler quickly became Carter-Williams, even before the eighth grader was nationally recruited.

"I loved how he did a lot," Mann said, "...and how his process (to the NBA) came about."

Seven years later, the junior's versatility has catapulted him to become Florida State's most valuable player. With the departure of last season's top-two leading scorers, Dwayne Bacon and Jonathan Isaac, Mann has had to redefine his game and vocalize his leadership, assistant coach Charlton Young said. The all-new Mann will be on display as the No. 23 Seminoles (12-4, 1-3 Atlantic Coast) host the Orange (12-5, 1-3) on Saturday.

Mann shouldn't struggle against Jim Boeheim's 2-3 zone because "he shoots the gaps and finds his spots in close," Young said.

"He's almost unselfish to a fault," Young said, "If you gave him the option to put up 40 points on a team or have a complete game, say 13 rebounds, nine assists and four blocks, he would choose the latter every time. I don't know a lot of kids that would say the same."

But more than just numbers, his willingness to take on numerous roles helps his team win on any given day, senior Phil Cofer said.

His desire to be versatile originates from his mother, Daynia La-Force. La-Force, who is the head coach of the University of Rhode Island's women's basketball team, molded her son to affect every aspect of the game, Mann said, because she desires that in all of her players.

"I didn't want to pigeonhole his game," La-Force said, "but he would hear me complain about or compliment players on my team and he would learn from that."

It started by accompanying his mom on road trips when she coached at Long Island University. Mann learned how to count by shouting the numbers on the back of basketball jerseys and while on team buses, he would always hang around his mother's players.

La-Force emphasized that Mann learned what kind of basketball player he wanted to become from being around the sport his whole life. Before and after every game, Mann always talks to her, La-Force said, and she offers him advice.

La-Force noticed the potential talent of her son the moment she saw him, as just an eighth grader, dunk for the first time. As La-Force started to realize her son's talents, she reached out to Young, then the head coach at Georgia

Southern, for advice. The two had once met at a Black Coaches & Administrators conference, and have been in contact ever since.

“I became his protection,” Young said, “His mom was hard on him, so I just told (Mann) to keep doing what he was doing.”

Young credits Mann for rejuvenating Florida State’s basketball program back in 2015. The No. 86 high school recruit in his class, according to ESPN, Mann was the first Seminole commitment in his class and helped convince players like Bacon and Malik Beasley to come to FSU.

Mann called Bacon and Beasley and pitched winning as an emphasis. It was his willingness to reach out to other top-tier players that helped lead his team to becoming a contender in the ACC, Young said.

This season more than ever, Mann has stepped up for the Seminoles. He’s increased his numbers in every statistical category across the board and his 61.5 percent mark from the field leads all ACC guards. When the Seminoles played then-No. 5 Florida on Dec. 4, Mann poured in 25 points along with eight rebounds to lead FSU to its first upset win of the season.

With three years of college experience under Mann’s belt, Young and Leo Papile, a former scout for the Boston Celtics and the founder of BABC, believe there’s a chance he can reach the heights of his childhood favorite player.

“You have to compare them,” Papile said. “Physically, (Mann’s) playing at the same level as (Carter-Williams).”